

Inspection of Pierview Academy

42-44 Harmer Street, Gravesend, Kent DA12 2AX

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 July 2025

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pierview Academy is life-changing. A commitment to 'empowering success through holistic and individualised learning' sits at its heart. Pupils join with little belief that it is going to be any different from the negative experiences before. However, they learn to enjoy school once again. This sentiment was captured well by pupils who said they 'feel like their needs are always met' and 'even when they cannot express how they feel, staff know how to help'.

Staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils benefit from a good-quality education. Students in the sixth form benefit from an exceptionally well-designed curriculum. Expert careers advice sets students on a path for future success. Small-group and individual teaching make this possible. Pupils feel happy and safe here. As a result, their behaviour and attitudes are exemplary.

An extensive programme of trips and visits means that there is never a dull moment. 'The lodge', the school's outdoor learning provision, provides exceptional opportunities. Pupils learn to swim in the outdoor pool. They help to build new areas, for example the outdoor classroom. Pupils enjoy caring for the animals. These opportunities help pupils to develop their social skills and independence exceptionally well.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils spend the early days at Pierview Academy settling in. This time is important as they develop an appreciation for the school's high expectations and routines. They learn the importance of attending school every day. Relationships are developed with staff so there is mutual trust and respect. Only when pupils are ready to learn do they begin to follow the planned curriculum. This careful approach engineers success for pupils.

Pupils follow an engaging, creative and personalised curriculum that takes account of their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Their interests and career aspirations are thoughtfully explored and reflected in what they learn. The school has carefully decided what pupils need to learn in each subject, logically ordering this content to help them to remember it.

Similar thought has gone into the curriculum that students follow in the sixth form. The curriculum in the sixth form is meticulously designed. Here, students follow highly personalised programmes that support their future aspirations effectively. Alongside English, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, humanities and physical education, students study creative and performing arts, cookery and music. They study other courses, including hair and beauty, construction, mechanics, digital skills and equestrian studies. Consequently, they achieve a wide range of accreditations and successfully move on to suitable education, employment or training.

Reading is prioritised. Its importance in helping pupils learn the rest of the curriculum is not underestimated. For this reason, staff and pupils read daily. A wide range of books and magazines ensures that there is something for everyone. The school library offers a welcoming space for pupils to spend time reading. Pupils take part in sponsored reads, successfully raising money for charity. Those who are at the earlier stages of learning to read follow a well-designed phonics programme that trained staff deliver effectively. Pupils read books that are carefully matched to the sounds they know. This gives them a sense of success and encourages them to read more. In time, pupils become confident readers and writers.

Pupils enjoy lessons and actively participate. This is because their interests are well catered for. Lessons are an opportunity for pupils to discuss different learning. Pupils confidently answer questions and work on a variety of learning tasks. Tasks are typically adapted effectively to support pupils in grasping new content. However, some staff do not do this consistently well for all pupils. This means that some pupils find it harder to learn and do not develop their knowledge and skills as well as they could.

Staff consistently model the behaviours and attitudes they expect to see from pupils. The strong working relationships staff develop with pupils help to ensure that pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for others. High expectations for pupils' behaviour permeate the school and are consistently reinforced by staff. Pupils behave exceptionally well. They go out of their way to help their peers when they are in need.

An exceptionally well-designed personal development programme gives pupils all the tools they need to become confident, resilient members of society who make a positive difference to the wider world. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the local community, coming up with their own ideas of what would help. They have opportunities to learn to play instruments, and those in the sixth form become student ambassadors. Pupils follow a precisely designed PSHE programme. They learn about important topics such as managing finances, healthy relationships and equality, diversity and inclusion. There are ample opportunities provided for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Pupils benefit highly from trips to the theatre, Christmas markets, airports and restaurants.

The proprietor, governors and senior leaders look after their staff well. They invest heavily in giving staff the tools they need to teach effectively. Staff feel valued and well supported. They feel they are given opportunities to develop personally and professionally. Many staff are supported to complete additional training and qualifications. Those who are responsible for governance are clear about the vision and future direction of the school. They have a deep understanding of the school, its strengths and the next steps in its development. Challenge and support in equal measure mean that the school is constantly improving. The school ensures that it meets the independent school standards consistently. It also complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The learning tasks that some pupils complete in lessons are not always adapted well enough to meet their individual needs. This means that pupils struggle to access the learning they are provided with as successfully as they could. The school should ensure that learning tasks are suitably designed to meet the needs of all pupils.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	138408
DfE registration number	886/6139
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10375003
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	ALP Education Group Ltd
Chair	Gemma Gosden
Headteacher	Debbie Pardey
Annual fees (day pupils)	£56,160 to £79,560
Telephone number	0203 026 9968
Website	www.pierviewacademy.co.uk
Email address	pierview@alpschools.org
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 July 2022

Information about this school

- Pierview Academy is an independent special school that caters for up to 40 pupils between the ages of 11 and 25. All pupils have an EHC plan for social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or associated needs. Some pupils have a diagnosis of autism.
- Since the school's last standard inspection, it received an additional material change inspection in July 2024 in order to increase the capacity of the school from 30 to 40 pupils.
- The school makes regular use of its own outdoor learning provision, called ALP The Lodge. This is located at Lavender Cottage, Westwood Road, Stockbury, ME9 7SQ. Many pupils on the school roll spend time at ALP The Lodge as part of their planned curriculum.
- The proprietor operates four other independent schools: ALP Leicester, ALP Nuneaton, ALP Sittingbourne and Park View Academy.
- The school uses five alternative provisions, including both registered and unregistered providers.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the proprietor body and a governor. Inspectors also met with groups of staff to explore their views about the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and English, mathematics and humanities. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive

culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at school. They observed pupils' behaviour and attitudes throughout the school day.
- The views of parents were gathered through the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The lead inspector toured the school's site to gather evidence about compliance with the independent school standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website. They scrutinised school records, including attendance and behaviour records.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Graham Chisnell

Ofsted Inspector

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